

AIR WAR COLLEGE

AIR UNIVERSITY

HYBRID WARFARE:

PREPARING FOR FUTURE CONFLICT

by

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A Research Report Submitted to the Faculty

In Partial Fulfillment of the Graduation Requirements

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17 February 2015

Report Documentation Page		Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188						
<p>Public reporting burden for the collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to a penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number.</p>								
1. REPORT DATE 17 FEB 2015	2. REPORT TYPE	3. DATES COVERED 00-00-2015 to 00-00-2015						
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Hybrid Warfare: Preparing For Future Conflict		5a. CONTRACT NUMBER						
		5b. GRANT NUMBER						
		5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER						
6. AUTHOR(S)		5d. PROJECT NUMBER						
		5e. TASK NUMBER						
		5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER						
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Air War College,,Air University,,Maxwell AFB,,AL		8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER						
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)		10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)						
		11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)						
12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution unlimited								
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES								
14. ABSTRACT Hybrid warfare will be the most likely type of conflict the US and its allies will face in the future. Hybrid warfare is the use of conventional and unconventional ways and means???by any combination of state and non-state actors???within the same battlespace. Conventional and unconventional ways and means include forces, weapons and tactics, and are characterized by the use of modern technology and a high degree of unity of effort between regular and irregular forces.								
15. SUBJECT TERMS								
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF: <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 33%; padding: 2px;">a REPORT unclassified</td> <td style="width: 33%; padding: 2px;">b ABSTRACT unclassified</td> <td style="width: 33%; padding: 2px;">c THIS PAGE unclassified</td> </tr> </table>			a REPORT unclassified	b ABSTRACT unclassified	c THIS PAGE unclassified	17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT Same as Report (SAR)	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 35	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a REPORT unclassified	b ABSTRACT unclassified	c THIS PAGE unclassified						

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Biography

Lieutenant Colonel Michael Miller is assigned to the Air War College, Air University, Maxwell AFB; AL. Lieutenant Colonel Miller graduated from the United States Air Force Academy in 1995 with a Bachelor of Science in English. He graduated from Air Command and Staff College, Air University, in 2007 with a Masters of Military Operational Art and Science. Lt Col Miller is a Command Pilot with over 3,400 flight hours in the C-130 E/H and C-130J. He served as the Squadron Commander of the 61st Airlift Squadron and the 774th Expeditionary Airlift Squadron. He is a veteran of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and has flown in support of peacekeeping operations in East Timor, the Balkans and Sudan.



Abstract

Hybrid warfare will be the most likely type of conflict the US and its allies will face in the future. *Hybrid warfare is the use of conventional and unconventional ways and means—by any combination of state and non-state actors—within the same battlespace.* Conventional and unconventional ways and means include forces, weapons and tactics, and are characterized by the use of modern technology and a high degree of unity of effort between regular and irregular forces.

The argument that hybrid warfare will be the most likely type of conflict the US and its allies will face in the future is based on a convergence of three geopolitical drivers. These include, the transformation of traditional governing structures, disputes over political power caused by long-standing cultural differences and state sponsorship of insurgencies and revolutions. Traditional security interests will lead to state sponsorship of internal conflicts as states choose sides in these struggles for power. The wars that result will be characterized by conventional and unconventional ways and means, producing hybrid war. Our own security interests and the interests of our allies will draw us into these wars, as we seek to maintain international order and prevent the spillover effects of war.

The strategic framework for preventing hybrid wars and deterring/defeating hybrid adversaries is based on two pillars. The first pillar consists of actions to assist and support weak or failing states. The second pillar consists of actions directed toward the hybrid adversary, which will most likely be a combination of a non-state actor and an internationally recognized state actor. Through use of the ongoing conflict in Ukraine as a case study, the implications of the analysis argue for building a balanced force that can simultaneously employ across the full spectrum of operations and rapidly deploy to all areas of the globe.

Introduction

The dispute between pro-Russian and pro-Western factions in Ukraine led to revolution and civil war in 2014. Russia's annexation of the Crimean Peninsula and military intervention in eastern Ukraine provoked international condemnation.¹ Though Russian President Vladimir Putin denied any military involvement, it became clear as the conflict continued, that the pro-Russian separatists in eastern Ukraine were not fighting alone.

In August 2014, a concerned NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen summarized the extent of Russian involvement: "We have seen artillery firing across the border and also inside Ukraine. We have seen Russian military buildup along the border. Quite clearly, Russia is involved in destabilizing eastern Ukraine . . . You see a sophisticated combination of traditional conventional warfare mixed up with information and primarily disinformation operations. It will take more than NATO to counter such hybrid warfare effectively."²

Russia's use of hybrid warfare in Ukraine represents a threat to state sovereignty in Eastern Europe, where, like Ukraine, many states have large Russian minority populations. Moreover, Russia's methods are sure to be emulated by other adversaries who seek to offset western conventional military superiority. For these reasons, hybrid warfare is a topic of strategic importance.

In the future, hybrid warfare will be the most likely type of conflict the US and its allies will face as a result of the convergence of several geopolitical drivers. These include, the transformation of traditional governing structures, disputes over political power caused by long-standing cultural differences, and state sponsorship of insurgencies. In this paper, I define hybrid warfare in detail, argue why it will be the most likely type of conflict the US and its allies will encounter, and lay out a strategic framework for deterring and defeating these hybrid threats.

The first, the supreme, the most far-reaching act of judgment that the statesman and commander have to make is to establish by that test the kind of war on which they are embarking; neither mistaking it for, nor trying to turn it into, something that is alien to its nature.

Clausewitz, On War, pg. 88

Defining Hybrid Warfare

The concept of hybrid war is closely related to military theorist William Lind's concept of *Fourth Generation Warfare*.³ Lind traces the evolution of the modern war from the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, which established the modern nation state, to the end of the twentieth century and the rise of powerful non-state actors. Lind's work shows how emerging battlefield technology and tactics influenced strategy, military organization and culture.⁴ *Fourth Generation Warfare* marks what Lind calls the “most radical” change from the Westphalian tradition because in it, the “state loses its monopoly on war.” The nature of this type of conflict calls into question the “legitimacy of the state.”⁵ Lind’s theory is exemplified by the rise of powerful non-state actors such as Hezbollah, Hamas and Al Qaeda. The rise of the Islamic State—and the debate surrounding whether it is in fact *a state*—also supports Lind’s theory.

Retired US Marine Corps Lieutenant Colonel Frank Hoffman was among the first military theorists to use the term *hybrid war*. Though several different modifications have been put forth,⁶ his definition remains the most routinely cited because it captures the unique aspects of hybrid warfare. Hoffman writes:

The blurring of modes of war, the blurring of who fights, and what technologies are brought to bear, produces a wide range of variety and complexity that we call Hybrid Warfare. Hybrid Wars can be conducted by both states and a variety of non-state actors. Hybrid Wars incorporate a range of different modes of warfare, including conventional capabilities, irregular tactics and formations, terrorist acts including indiscriminate violence and coercion, and criminal disorder. These multi-modal activities can be conducted by separate units, or even by the same unit, but are generally operationally and tactically directed and coordinated within the main battlespace to achieve synergistic effects.⁷

Hoffman contends the classic example of a hybrid war is the 2006 conflict in Lebanon between Israel and Hezbollah. Hoffman asserts Hezbollah “demonstrated a number of state-like military capabilities,” that included “short and intermediate-range rockets and missiles,” “anti-armor missile systems,” Iranian-supplied UAVs, and a “signals intelligence” capability that permitted Hezbollah to monitor Israeli phone calls and “de-encrypt” “frequency hopping radio traffic.”⁸

The current war in Ukraine meets Hoffman’s criteria for a hybrid war. There is a level of *operationally and tactically directed coordination* taking place between the pro-Russian rebel forces and the Russian military. You also see a number of *state-like military capabilities* being used by the Russian-backed rebels. For these reasons, leaders like NATO Secretary General Rasmussen and Supreme Allied Commander General Philip Breedlove have chosen to characterize the ongoing conflict in Ukraine as a hybrid one.⁹ This characterization is important because it reveals the nature of the war—Clausewitz’s “supreme” and most “far-reaching” act of judgment for military commanders.

I define hybrid warfare as *the use of conventional and unconventional ways and means—by any combination of state and non-state actors—within the same battlespace*.¹⁰ In my definition, ways and means include *operations, tactics, forces and weapons*. These ways and means are characterized by the use of *modern technology* and *a high degree of unity of effort* between conventional and unconventional forces. The modern battlespace may include geographic zones outside the physical borders of the conflict. For example, surface to air missile batteries operating within the borders of one state may be used to restrict freedom movement in the conflict region. The modern battlespace has also expanded to include space and cyber space, and includes its exploitation for informational, financial and kinetic effects.

Hybrid warfare is more complicated, nuanced and expansive than the unconventional wars we have fought in the past. Hybrid warfare can take place between any combination of state and non-state actors. In many cases, non-state actors or insurgent groups will have some degree of state sponsorship. This is the case in Ukraine. The state will most likely provide the non-state actor with the financial support, advanced weaponry and covert forces necessary to wage hybrid war. We might also encounter a situation where irregular forces support the state. This is the case with the Shi'a and Kurdish militias in Iraq.

The political role of non-state actors may also be more prominent in hybrid war than in previous wars that featured the combination of conventional and unconventional forces. In hybrid wars, it will be difficult to discern the organization, command and control structure, and political goals of the adversary. This characteristic will have a major impact on strategy. For example, the Viet Cong augmented the North Vietnamese Army for much of the Vietnam War, but there was no doubt that Ho Chi Minh was the political leader of the effort. On the other hand, Hezbollah plays a much more dominant political role in Lebanon, as does Hamas in Gaza. Discerning who is leading those organizations, and the degree of influence of their state sponsors is challenging. This characteristic is critical, because ending a hybrid war will involve negotiating the terms of surrender or peace with both the non-state actor and the state sponsor.

In summary, hybrid warfare represents the synthesis of all the ways and means available in modern warfare. As Russia's actions in Ukraine have made clear, our future adversaries will exploit those ways and means for their military and political advantage.



Figure 1

Why Hybrid Warfare Will be the Most Likely Form of Future Conflict

Hybrid warfare will be the most likely type of conflict the US and its allies will encounter in the future as a result of several geopolitical drivers. These include, the transformation of traditional governing structures, disputes over political power caused by long-standing cultural differences and state sponsorship of insurgencies and revolutions. Economic factors may also contribute, as there is a strong historical correlation between widespread economic hardship and political instability. The ensuing struggles will lead to insurgencies and civil wars in weak and failing states. Traditional security interests will lead to state sponsorship of internal conflicts as states choose sides in these struggles for power. The wars that result will be characterized by conventional and unconventional ways and means, producing hybrid war.

Our own security interests and the interests of our allies will draw us into these wars, as we seek to maintain international order and prevent the spillover effects of war, such as international terrorism and the mass flow of refugees.

Figure 1 (see previous page) depicts what this environment will look like. Usually, all of the actors and drivers that are fomenting hybrid war will be present, although in varying degrees based upon the particular conflict. A thorough understanding of each of the actors and drivers is required to develop the appropriate strategic response.¹¹

The first such driver is the notion that *traditional governing structures are continuing to transform or unravel* in many parts of the world. In the greater Middle East, many of the pan-Arab governments that were militarily sustained by the US or Soviet Union during the Cold War are transforming, as exemplified by the Arab Spring. Additionally, many countries in Eastern Europe, such as Ukraine, are still struggling to implement democracy. Finally, countries in Africa, Asia and the Americas are still struggling to implement peaceful democratic rule after centuries of colonial rule. As these governmental transformations take place, long-buried cultural differences within each state are coming to the surface as factions struggle for political power.

By *cultural differences*, I am referring to deeply rooted disputes, and not simply the surface definitions of culture like external customs or dialect. What we see taking place worldwide are conflicts based on long-standing *historical, religious and ideological differences* such as those that exist between Shi'a and Sunni Muslim, Pashtun Taliban or ethnic Tajik, or Southern Sudan Animist/Christian and Northern Sudan Arab/Muslim. These cultural differences often form the backbone of political movements as states fail, and the absence of the rule of law leads to violence.¹²

Several prominent scholars have written about the influence culture plays in initiating conflict. William Lind identified the shift from state on state conflict back to a more ancient form of warfare driven by cultural differences.¹³ Political scientist Samuel Huntington and historian John Keegan published major works on how culture leads to conflict.¹⁴ Frank Hoffman argues warfare in the modern era will be characterized by a violent ideological struggle, waged primarily by non-state actors who fight in a manner that “blurs” the divide between conventional and irregular war. He writes, “Rather than Fukuyama’s *End of History*, our security is challenged by a violent reaction generated as a side product of globalization.¹⁵ This reaction is abetted or exploited by the fervently fanatic and faith-based factions within the Middle East.”¹⁶

In the greater Middle East, underlying historical, religious and ideological differences that were masked by the rule of pan-Arab Nationalist dictators during the Cold War and its immediate aftermath are now rising to the surface and producing violent conflict. This struggle is often driven by a secular/fundamentalist divide—as seen in Libya and Egypt, or Shi'a/Sunni divide—as seen in Syria and Iraq. Cultural, religious and ideological struggles for power are not limited to the greater Middle East. In Africa, we are seeing the continued growth of Islamic fundamentalist non-state actors and insurgent groups—like *Boko Haram* in Nigeria—who are attempting to resolve their differences through the use of violence. In many of the former Soviet Republics, large Russian minorities have expressed their desire to re-establish closer ties with Russia, as opposed to the various ethnic majorities who seek to establish relations with the west. The conflict in Ukraine is partially explained by the centuries-old struggle between Russia and the west.

In addition to cultural drivers such as historical grievances, religion and ideology, *traditional state security interests* will also lead to the outbreak of hybrid wars. Putin’s

intervention in Ukraine is driven by a confluence of cultural factors and his desire for a security buffer zone between Russia and NATO.¹⁷ Security interests and culture also intersect in the ongoing wars in Syria and Iraq. All of the major regional actors—Iran, Iraq, Syria, Turkey, Jordan and Saudi Arabia—have complex security and cultural reasons that influence their participation in the conflict.

As states provide non-state actors with *financial backing, modern weapons and well-trained forces*, hybrid wars will become increasingly complex. As a result, hybrid war will take on the characteristics of a low-level insurgency and a modern conventional war. In Ukraine, the rebel use of radar guided surface-to-air missiles, MANPADs (man-portable air-defense systems) and anti-aircraft artillery—presumably supplied by Russia¹⁸—has resulted in the shoot down of twenty Ukrainian military fixed-wing aircraft and helicopters, in addition to Malaysian Airlines Flight MH-17.¹⁹

Hybrid warfare will also use *modern information technology*—such as cell phones and social media—for the purposes of connecting and organizing large groups to support a political cause and for battlefield command and control. The Arab Spring is one example. In the future, we will most likely witness the increasingly sophisticated use of cyber warfare in order to disrupt or destroy state industrial, financial and military networks. We have already seen the Russians conduct cyber attacks in Georgia and Estonia.²⁰

During hybrid war, all of the geopolitical drivers and factors discussed above will merge, making the hybrid battlespace increasingly more complex. The *Hybrid Warfare Framework I* offer in the next section is designed to address each of these actors and drivers in parallel in order to prevent hybrid conflict from occurring—or if necessary, bring about conflict termination and resolution after a hybrid war begins.

Hybrid Warfare Framework

Actions in support of weak & failing states Conflict prevention & resolution	Actions vs. hybrid adversary Conflict deterrence & resolution
<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ <i>Intelligence collection & analysis</i> about the actors & drivers of potential conflict➤ Use of <i>diplomacy</i> to reform government & build international coalitions➤ <i>Information operations</i> to discourage support for insurgent groups & encourage governmental reforms➤ <i>Economic assistance</i> in order to support government services and population➤ <i>Military security cooperation</i> activities to maintain internal security & protect borders	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ <i>Intelligence collection & analysis</i> about the actors & drivers of ongoing conflict➤ Use of <i>diplomacy</i> to bring about conflict termination & resolution➤ <i>Information operations</i> to expose state sponsorship of insurgent groups; build support for US cause➤ <i>Economic & financial sanctions</i> vs. state sponsor; freeze non-state assets➤ <i>Building a military force & operational plan</i> to deter & defeat a hybrid adversary

Figure 2

Deterring and Defeating Hybrid Adversaries

The strategic framework for preventing hybrid wars and deterring/defeating hybrid adversaries is based on two pillars, as seen in *Figure 2* above. *The first pillar consists of actions to assist and support weak or failing states.* The actions in this pillar focus on the *prevention and resolution* of hybrid wars through intelligence collection and thoughtful analysis about the actors and drivers of potential conflict; use of diplomacy to reform government and build international coalitions; use of information operations to discourage support for insurgent groups and encourage governmental reforms; use of economic assistance in order to support government services and the population; and military security cooperation activities to maintain internal security and protect borders. Each of these actions should be directed toward the key actors and

dominant drivers of each particular conflict, and they should be applied *simultaneously*.

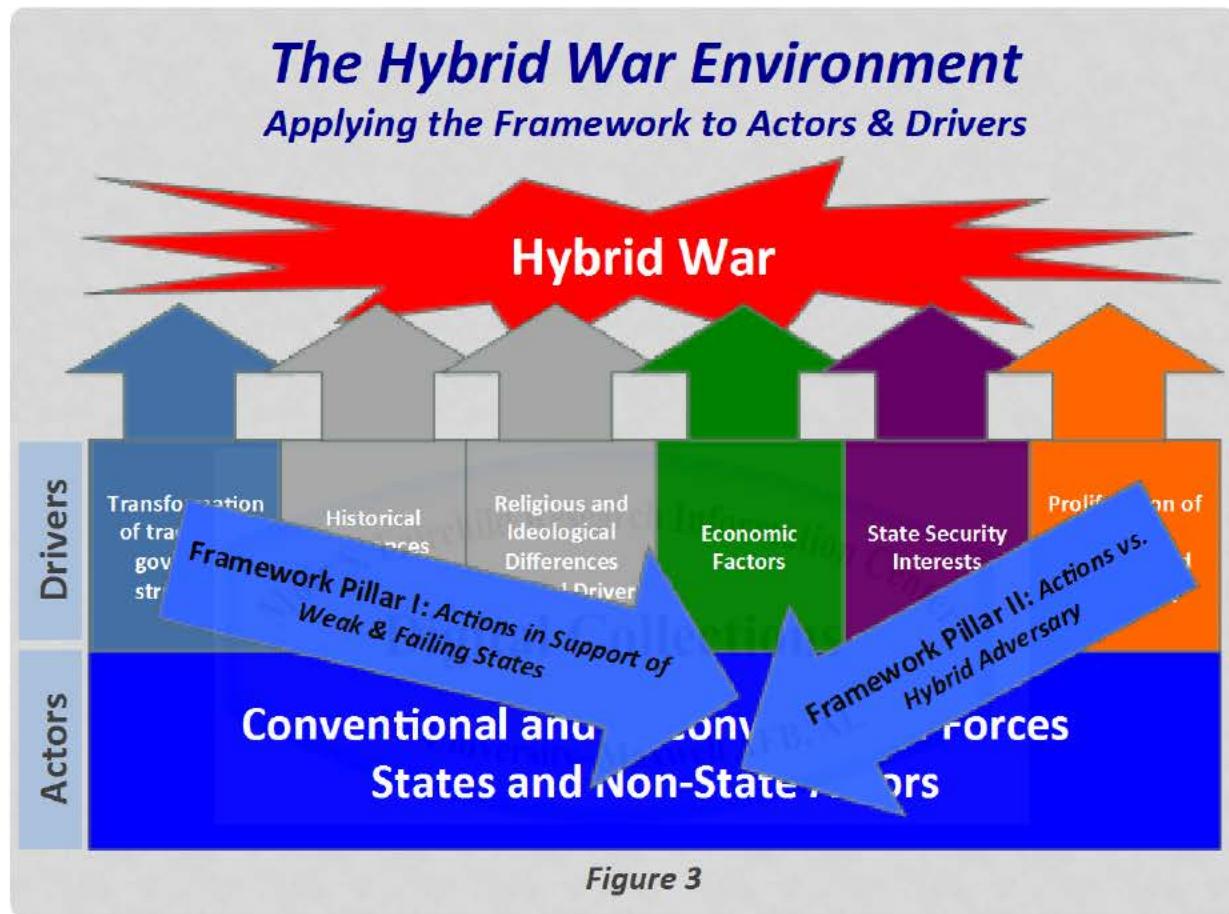
Furthermore, these actions must also continue to be applied once hybrid conflict breaks out.

The second pillar consists of actions directed toward the hybrid adversary, which will most likely be a combination of a non-state actor and an internationally recognized state actor.

These actions will focus on *deterring* state sponsors from fueling hybrid conflict, or *defeating* the hybrid adversary once a war has begun. They include: collecting and analyzing intelligence about the forces driving the hybrid war and the actors who are participating in it—to include their motives, strategy and tactics; conducting diplomatic negotiations with all parties and building international support for our objectives; conducting information operations on a strategic scale to expose the state's sponsorship of insurgent, terrorist or revolutionary groups and any war crimes or atrocities being committed by the hybrid opponents and building support for the US/coalition cause; imposing economic and financial sanctions on state sponsors and freezing the funds of non-state actors; and building a military force to deter—and if necessary decisively defeat—the hybrid adversary within the hybrid battlespace. These actions fall more in line with traditional strategic and operational planning; however, they will need to be modified to address hybrid war.

One of the lessons observed from the study of hybrid conflicts is the requirement to be able to simultaneously counter conventional and unconventional threats. We should re-address the current method of *operational planning* that divides conflicts into shaping, seizing the initiative, decisive action, and transition to civil authority phases. Because hybrid wars concurrently take on characteristics of both conventional and unconventional conflict, our plans will have to adjust as well. Conventional and unconventional military actions, such as targeting military supply routes and protecting the population, must occur at the same time. They will not

occur in series—as is typical of traditional planning, with stability and transition to civil-authority operations occurring after major conflict ends.²¹ **Figure 3** (see below) shows how these pillars cut-across all of the actors and drivers involved in a hybrid conflict.



Intelligence analysis is a key component of both pillars of the framework. The US must continue to develop our intelligence capabilities so we may better understand the cultural and political factors that drive non-state and state actors to resort to violence. We should devote more resources not only to intelligence collection, but also to thoughtful and varied analysis—especially with regard to understanding the drivers and locations of potential conflict. If indications of future conflict can be identified early, then the US and its allies can target resources toward the areas that may prevent conflict from erupting and spreading. This is

particularly critical in the areas of the globe that our political leaders believe represent a threat to our vital interests or to the international order. Analysis will identify which drivers are most important and the likelihood of political conflict becoming violent. The fact we were caught off-guard by the Arab Spring and the rapid rise of the Islamic State supports this claim. We should rely not only on US analysis, but also on the analysis of other states and non-governmental organizations. Approaching the analysis from different paradigms is likely to lead to a more accurate perspective.

As we identify areas of potential or ongoing conflict, we will need to use our *diplomatic, informational, economic and military sources of power* to keep these conflicts from erupting into full-scale hybrid wars or resolving them after they have already begun. As with intelligence collection and analysis, all of these elements should target the drivers of conflict and be modified according to the context of each particular situation. Diplomacy should be used to resolve internal and external political conflict through peaceful means. Information operations should be used to effectively shape the domestic and international political environment and to encourage peaceful resolution. Economic assistance should attempt to support government infrastructure and services, and economic sanctions should target state sponsors and non-state financial assets. In the first pillar, military power should be used for security cooperation, foreign internal defense and border security; however, it should be used thoughtfully—and not for the purpose of suppressing minority factions.

Under this paradigm, military security cooperation must be done with an eye toward the cultural and political drivers of conflict, and be careful not to exacerbate them. In the past, foreign aid, to include arms sales, has often led to the suppression of minority voices—despite the best intentions of our military and State Department leaders. The dictatorship in Egypt and

the Shia' dominated government of Iraq are two potential examples that come to mind. In both instances, governments who suppressed or excluded large segments of their populations were enabled by US financial and military support. Our current paradigm for financial aid, security cooperation and foreign internal defense will have to evolve in order to ensure we are not arming our future adversaries in the event insurgents topple US-backed governments or take control of the weapons of the state. The rise of the Islamic State in Iraq is an example, as they now control many of the weapons we provided to the Iraqi state. The increasing prominence of insurgent groups in Yemen is another. Security cooperation will only be successful over the long term if it supports a just government that gives voice to minority factions.

In a recent interview with *Vox*'s Matthew Yglesias, President Barack Obama emphasized the importance of just and inclusive government when discussing the ongoing strategy to combat the Islamic State. The president said, "What we've learned in Iraq is you can keep a lid on those sectarian issues as long as we've got the greatest military on Earth there on the ground, but as soon as we leave, which at some point we would, we'd have the same problems again. So what I said was Iraqis have to show us that they are prepared to put together a functioning government, that the Shia majority is prepared to reach out to the Kurds and Sunnis, and that they're credibly willing to fight on the ground."²² This effort will have to strike a delicate balance between US interests and the protection of individual rights. For this reason, *the role of just governance and the protection of civil rights* must be conditions of any US military and economic assistance.

The ongoing conflict in Ukraine offers a good model for demonstrating how the above framework should be employed. The US and its allies should take the following actions toward Ukraine: intelligence collection and analysis in order to understand the dynamics of the internal security situation in Ukraine; diplomacy to enact cease-fires; information operations to build

support internally for just government; economic assistance to help the Ukrainian people and stabilize the government; and security cooperation—to include arms sales—to ensure the Ukrainians can properly defend their borders and maintain internal security.

Additionally, the US and its allies should take the following actions toward Russia and the hybrid rebel force fighting inside Ukraine: intelligence collection and analysis to ascertain Russia's strategy and desired end state; diplomacy to shore up international support for Russian sanctions and bring about a diplomatic solution to the crisis; informational power—through the use of all media—to reveal the truth behind Russia's furtive involvement; economic sanctions to pressure the Russian economy;²³ and military power to build a force that will deter future aggression. This force should be a combination of NATO's planned reaction force and a division size US ground force—augmented by NATO air, space, cyber and special operations forces.

In December 2014, NATO announced the decision to create a brigade-size “interim spearhead force” comprised of German, Dutch and Norwegian troops and capable of rapidly deploying to potentially troubled regions by January 2015.²⁴ The NATO reaction force will be built to deploy on very short notice. It will serve as a “test bed” for a larger permanent force that is scheduled to deploy in 2016. NATO states the force has the “overarching purpose of being able to provide a rapid military response to an emerging crisis, whether for collective defense purposes or for other crisis-response operations.”²⁵ The response force will contain naval, air, land and special operations forces. The nations who contribute to the force will rotate. Most importantly, the force “will be tailored (adjusted in size and capability) to match the demands of any specific operation to which it is committed.”²⁶

As it designs its reaction force, NATO should heed the lessons of previous hybrid wars. RAND scholar David Johnson presents an excellent example of the tactical lessons learned

during the 2006 hybrid war between Israel and Hezbollah. In *Military Capabilities for Hybrid War: Insights from the Israeli Defense Forces in Lebanon and Gaza*, Johnson characterizes the unique threat posed by hybrid opponents. He illustrates how misperceptions of an adversary's capabilities can lead to poor choices in strategy, operations, tactics and resources. Johnson maintains US successes in the Kosovo War, Afghanistan and Iraq "spurred a belief in the Israeli defense establishment that standoff attack by fires (principally by air power) was an effective means to affect the will of an adversary and determine outcomes."²⁷ Additionally, he argues, "the second al-Aqsa intifada, which began in late 2000, forced the Israeli Army to focus on operations to stop terrorist attacks inside Israel." This led Israeli leaders to conclude "Israel was beyond the era of a major war and that the primary role of ground forces was LIC (Low Intensity Conflict)."²⁸ When standoff fires via airpower failed to defeat the will of Hezbollah, Israel found itself involved in a violent ground war in southern Lebanon it was unprepared to wage.

Johnson believes the Israelis entered the ground conflict in Lebanon unprepared for their more technologically advanced and tactically sophisticated opponent.²⁹ Johnson's analysis ties directly to the idea that the combination of state sponsorship and modern weapons technology is a potential enabler—or driver—of conflict escalation. Hezbollah's ability to inflict damage on Israeli Defense Forces through the use of modern technology significantly changed the character of the fight. If Israel understood this dynamic going into the conflict, they would have been able to adjust their strategy and operational planning accordingly.

Johnson's description of what took place on the battlefield highlights danger for states that believe airpower can win a war by itself. There is equal warning for states that believe all future land warfare will resemble low-intensity conflict, and consequently choose to focus on unconventional threats at the exclusion of conventional ones.³⁰ Johnson warns the US may make

the same mistake the Israelis did prior to the war in Lebanon if they draw similar conclusions about future wars from their counter-insurgency experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan.³¹ NATO should heed these lessons as it designs its response force. It must be large enough—and sophisticated enough at combined arms and maneuver—in order to serve as an effective deterrent in Eastern Europe.

Another consideration for the response force is determining the political will of all the nations who plan to contribute to it. Some scholars have warned about the potential political shortcomings of the NATO force. Heidi Hardt writes, “Time and again, policymakers have debated the idea of rapid-reaction forces. Practitioners recognize that delays cost lives. Yet of those international organizations that have invested in rapid-reaction forces, none have followed through with deployment. Political will has both prevented the deployment of rapid-reaction forces and slowed the establishment of broader peacekeeping operations. After decades of attempts, the United Nations failed to establish a rapid-reaction force.”³² In order for the NATO reaction force to be an effective deterrent, all of the nations will have to be prepared to act jointly and rapidly.

Given the state of current European military forces, the reaction force will need to be augmented by a sizeable US force in order to deter future aggression in Eastern Europe. This will most likely require forward deploying a division size force of approximately 10,000 troops to Eastern Europe, while diplomatically signaling to Russia the defensive nature of the movement. In December 2014, the Army announced plans to rotate approximately 100 Abrams tanks, Bradley fighting vehicles and an unspecified number of ground troops to Poland as a deterrent force.³³ This force will need to be supported by NATO air, space, cyber and special operations forces. If necessary, US and NATO naval assets, including a Marine Expeditionary Unit, could

be deployed to the Baltic Sea to further signal NATO's resolve. In June 2014, the USS Mount Whitney (LCC 20) and the Arleigh Burke class guided-missile destroyer USS Oscar Austin (DDG 79) participated in Baltic Operations (BALTOPS), the annual joint and combined exercise in the Baltic Sea.³⁴ This type of exercise could serve as a useful deterrent in the future, especially if the number of nations who participate in it expands. It must occur in parallel with clear diplomatic communications; however, in order to avoid inadvertently escalating the crisis.



Today's conflicts clearly combine new actors with new technology and new or transfigured ways of war, but the old threats also remain and have to be dealt with at the same time and in the same space, stressing the resources and overloading the systems of western militaries.

David Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerilla*, pgs. 5-6.

Conclusion and Additional Recommendations

Hybrid war will be the most likely conflict the US will face in the future. The transformation of traditional governing structures will reveal deep-rooted cultural and ideological differences, and subsequently lead to violent struggles for political power in weak and failing states. Additionally, traditional security interests will lead to the state sponsorship of insurgencies through financial backing and the proliferation of modern weapons of war. The wars that result will be characterized by both conventional and unconventional ways and means.

The US must remember the historical and cultural lessons it learned from its counter-insurgency campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan, and at the same time prepare to face a far more technologically and operationally sophisticated enemy. Future conflicts may deny US forces the freedom of movement they have enjoyed in the last two conflicts. The potential combination of Improvised Explosive Devices, electronic and cyber warfare, anti-armor weapons, long-range rockets, Unmanned Aerial Vehicles and sophisticated anti-aircraft weapons will make a future hybrid conflict extremely challenging.

In the past, terms like Full Spectrum Operations implied the US must be prepared to conduct all types of operations—from peacekeeping missions and low-intensity conflict on one end of the spectrum, to conventional war on the other. In hybrid war, all of the characteristics of Full Spectrum Operations may appear in the same battlespace and at the same time.

The framework I propose for deterring and defeating hybrid conflicts relies heavily on intelligence collection and analysis in order to understand the actors involved in hybrid conflict and the forces driving them toward violence. Moreover, it makes coordinated and parallel use of

the diplomatic, informational and economic instruments of national power in order prevent hybrid conflicts from occurring, deter state sponsors and resolve these conflicts after they begin. The military component of both pillars of my framework must occur in parallel with the other instruments of power, whether being used to deter aggression, dissuade insurgent activities, or defeat a hybrid adversary in a full-scale hybrid war.

Potential hybrid threats will require us to re-evaluate the debate over future US force structure, which currently pits the proponents of a low-tech—and manpower intensive—counter-insurgency force against the proponents of a force built to wage modern conventional war. An enemy who possesses the mixture of high-tech weaponry and unconventional ways and means will present a dangerous challenge to US planners as they seek to develop a military strategy to counter such threats. We should continue to modernize our forces for both conventional and unconventional wars with the appropriate mix of sophistication, quality, quantity, and flexibility. Finally, we need to build a flexible, adaptable and mobile force that can rapidly respond to crises around the globe.

Total Word Count: 4933

Notes

(All notes appear in shortened form. For full details, see the appropriate entry in the bibliography)

¹ *The New York Times*, “Ukraine News Today—Ukraine Latest News & Facts.”

² Traynor, “Ukraine crisis: Nato plans east European bases to counter Russia.”

³ Lind, “Understanding Fourth Generation War,” 12.

⁴ Ibid., 12-13. Lind argues that the *Four Generations of Modern Warfare* began with the Peace of Westphalia in 1648. The treaty established what Lind terms “a monopoly on war” by the state, which had previously been shared by “many different entities … families, tribes, religions, cities, business enterprises—using many different means, not just armies and navies.” Lind categorizes the generations of warfare according to the way battlefield tactics influenced military culture and discipline. The *First Generation of Modern War* consisted of “line-and column” tactics and lasted from 1648-1860. It was characterized by a “battlefield of order” that created a “military culture of order.” The *Second Generation of Modern War* was developed by the French Army during World War I, and sought victory by “mass firepower” and “attrition.” The French summed it up as “the artillery conquers, the infantry occupies.” In this type of warfare, “obedience” is the most important aspect of military culture. Lind argues this type of war is the “American way of war,” with aviation replacing artillery as the primary source of “firepower.” The *Third Generation of Modern Warfare*, developed by the Germans, is most commonly known as “Blitzkrieg” or “maneuver warfare.” Its defining characteristics are “speed,” “surprise,” and “mental and physical dislocation.” Consequently, it demands that its practitioners possess “initiative” rather than unquestioned “obedience.”

⁵ Ibid., 12-14.

⁶ See Mansoor, “Hybrid Warfare in History,” 1-17. Although Frank Hoffman’s definition of hybrid war remains the most frequently cited, other scholars take a broader view. Retired US Army Colonel and Ohio State University Professor of History Dr. Pete Mansoor writes, “although there is little new in hybrid war as a concept, it is a useful means of thinking about war’s past, present, and future.” For Mansoor, hybrid war has more to do with the way “forces engage” in war, than the “nature” of war itself. Mansoor argues that a hybrid war involves “a combination of conventional military forces and irregulars (guerillas, insurgents, and terrorists), which could include both state and non-state actors, aimed at achieving a common political purpose.” When viewed from this broader perspective, a multitude of conflicts—from the Peloponnesian Wars, to the Boer War, to the French and American wars in Vietnam—become hybrid. In order to be successful in hybrid warfare, Mansoor argues political and military leaders must: (1) “understand the nature of their opponent,” (2) “adjust existing doctrine to take into account the kind of war in which their forces engage,” and (3) “create viable operational concepts that link strategy to tactical actions.” Hoffman would refer to the type of conflict Mansoor describes as “compound war.” See Hoffman’s “Hybrid vs. compound war—The Janus choice – Defining today’s multifaceted conflict.” I believe the increasingly dominant role of non-state actors, combined with the powerful effects of modern weapons and information technology, support Hoffman’s assertion that hybrid warfare is distinct from the compound wars we have seen in the past, although it is truly by a matter of degree. Nonetheless, both definitions have substantial merit—the focus for leaders and strategists should be on understanding the unique nature of each conflict rather than arguing over semantics.

⁷ Hoffman, “Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars,” 14.

⁸ Ibid., 35-38. In “What the Past Suggests,” historian Williamson Murray offers an opposing view. Murray argues that nothing in the 2006 Lebanon War was new. He criticizes the analysis of the conflict as a new phenomenon, writing, “To many of these analysts, the combination by Shi'a militia of conventional military tactics with guerilla and terrorist activities appeared to represent a novel approach to war that would revolutionize conflict in the twenty-first century.... Given what passes for serious intellectual discourse in Washington, this response to the challenge of hybrid war is not surprising.” For Murray (like Mansoor), the defining characteristic of hybrid war is the ability of an adversary to pose a “two-fold threat” to their opponent—“conventional forces” that dictate a concentration of firepower, and “disrupting forces” that dictate dispersal. Murray uses several examples, most notably the American Revolution and the American Civil War, to demonstrate the challenges of fighting a hybrid war. Because hybrid war has the propensity to become total, Murray concludes, “Victory would seem to be a matter largely of a willingness to spend lives and resources in what one can only describe as a profligate fashion.” His solution: “Do not fight a hybrid war unless the most fundamental interest of the state are at stake.” The 2006 conflict in Lebanon and the ongoing conflict in Ukraine more closely resemble Hoffman’s definition of Hybrid War primarily because of the significant role of non-state actors, the powerful effects created by modern weapons and information technology, and the nature of the expanded battlespace.

⁹ See John Vandiver’s article, “SACEUR: Allies must prepare for Russia ‘hybrid war.’” In September 2014, NATO Supreme Allied Commander General Philip Breedlove echoed NATO Secretary General Rasmussen’s concerns about Russian involvement, and began repeatedly emphasizing Russia’s role in the conflict. Breedlove said, “What we see in Russia now, in this hybrid approach to war, is to use all the tools they have ... to stir up problems they can then begin to exploit through their military tool ... We’re observing Russian forces fighting alongside separatists ... Russian air defense assets are being used to conceal the advance of Russian tactical units throughout eastern Ukraine.”

¹⁰ *Department of Defense Directive 3000.07: Irregular Warfare*, 14. The DoD equates *conventional warfare* with *traditional warfare*. Traditional warfare is a “form of warfare between the regulated militaries of states, or alliances of states, in which the objective is to defeat an adversary’s armed forces, destroy an adversary’s war-making capacity, or seize or retain territory in order to force a change in an adversary’s government or policies.” The DoD defines *unconventional warfare* as “activities conducted to enable a resistance movement or insurgency to coerce, disrupt, or overthrow a government or occupying power by operating through or with an underground, auxiliary, and guerrilla force in a denied area.”

¹¹ See *The Making of Strategy: Rulers, States and War (Introduction)*, by Williamson Murray and Mark Grimsley, 2. Murray and Grimsley write, “Historical experience creates preconceptions about the nature of war and politics and may generate irresistible strategic imperatives. And ideology and culture shape the course of decision-makers and their societies in both conscious and unconscious ways.”

¹² My recommendation to focus on the root causes of conflict was strongly influenced by many of the ideas in David Kilcullen’s *The Accidental Guerilla*. I agree with Kilcullen’s assertion that “terrorist infection is thus part of the social pathology of broader societal breakdown, state weakness, and humanitarian crisis.” See *The Accidental Guerilla*, pg. 35.

¹³ Lind, “Understanding Fourth Generation War,” 13-14. There is some evidence of cultural bias in Lind’s work when he says, “invasion by immigration can be just as dangerous as invasion by force” and that America, with its “poisonous ideology of multiculturalism, is a prime candidate for fourth generation war.”

¹⁴ See Samuel Huntington’s *Clash of Civilizations* and John Keegan’s *A History of Warfare*. Huntington distinguishes ideology from culture. I believe the two are often related by a common religion and a shared philosophical or historical worldview. Keegan argues that warfare is cultural instead of political (in the traditional Clausewitzian sense).

¹⁵ Hoffman is referring to Francis Fukuyama’s idea of “the end of history,” as argued in his 1989 essay and subsequent book. Fukuyama first published an essay titled “The End of History” in the *National Interest* in 1989. He published a book titled *The End of History and the Last Man* in 1992. In both, Fukuyama asserts that “history … appeared to culminate in liberty: elected governments, individual rights, an economic system in which capital and labor circulated with relatively modest state oversight.” This quote comes from an updated version of Fukuyama’s view on the topic, “At the ‘End of History’ Still Stands Democracy,” published in the 6 June 2014 electronic edition of *The Wall Street Journal* (see Bibliography).

¹⁶ Hoffman, “Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars,” 11-12.

¹⁷ Former Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott captures all of the presumed reasons behind Russia’s recent hybrid activity in Ukraine in a recent *Politico Magazine* article titled, “The Making of Vladimir Putin.” Talbott writes, Putin’s “mindset reflects public longing for Russia’s geopolitical heyday, disillusionment with the downside of Gorbachev-Yeltsin reforms, and grievances with various policies of both the George W. Bush and Obama administrations: the U.S. withdrawal from the ABM treaty in 2002; the invasion of Iraq in 2003; Western support for the “color” revolutions in two post-Soviet countries, Georgia and Ukraine, in the mid-2000s; Kosovo’s attainment of formal independence in 2008; and the second and third rounds of NATO expansion in 2004 and 2009, which brought into the alliance another six former Communist countries as well as the three Baltic states that had been annexed by Stalin after his pact with Hitler in 1939.

¹⁸ Whitlock, “Separatists said to have received antiaircraft training in Russia.”

¹⁹ Wikipedia, “List of Ukrainian aircraft losses during the 2014-15 pro-Russian unrest in Ukraine,” http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Ukrainian_aircraft_losses_during_the_2014-15_pro-Russian_unrest_in_Ukraine (accessed 29 January 2014). The aircraft include: 2x MiG-29s, 1x Su-24, 5x Su-25s, 1x Il-76, 1x An-26, 1x An-30, 4x Mi-8/17s, and 5x Mi-24s. The Wikipedia entry lists several local news agencies as source information.

²⁰ Rid, “Cyber War Will Not Take Place,” 14.

²¹ Frank Hoffman makes a similar recommendations with regard to intelligence, foreign internal defense and operational planning in “Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars,” pgs. 43-54.

²² Klein and Yglesias, “Obama: The Vox Conversation.”

²³ See Julia Ioffe’s article “Russia’s Currency Is Plummeting and Putin’s Billionaires Are Cannibalizing Each Other” in *The New Republic* for a description of the effect of oil and sanctions on Russia’s currency, and subsequently, its billionaire oligarchs.

²⁴ Gordon, “Nimble New NATO Force to Take Form Next Year.”

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ NATO, “NATO Response Force: At the centre of NATO transformation.”

²⁷ Johnson, “Military Capabilities for Hybrid War: Insights from the Israel Defense Forces in Lebanon and Gaza,” 2.

²⁸ Ibid., 2.

²⁹ Ibid., 2.

³⁰ Johnson describes the key characteristics of the fight in pg. 3-4 of his essay, writing, “Initially, the IDF tried to decide the issue with standoff air and artillery attacks, but this did not stop the rocket attacks on Israel, nor result in the return of the soldiers whose capture had precipitated the war. Eventually, Israeli ground forces entered Lebanon, where they had real difficulties.... One of the key deficiencies was that the Israeli Army, highly conditioned by its LIC experience was initially confounded by an enemy that presented a high-intensity challenge that required joint combined arms fire and maneuver and a combat mindset different from that of Palestinian terrorists, even though Hezbollah did not have large formations....Hezbollah was a disciplined and trained adversary, operating in cohesive small units and occupying good terrain. It also had standoff fires (ATGMs, mortars and rockets) capability. Thus, defeating Hezbollah, required joint combined arms fire and maneuver, something the IDF was largely incapable of executing in 2006.

³¹ Ibid., 8-9.

³² Hardt, “Is the NATO rapid-reaction force fiction?”

³³ Sisk, “US Army Plans to Send Abrams Tanks and Bradleys to Eastern Europe.”

³⁴ U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa/U.S. 6th Fleet Public Affairs, “Five Things You Need to Know about BALTOPS 2014.”

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